

THE HISTORY OF REORGANIZATION

The papers that bolted in 1896 bitterly resent any criticism of Mr. Cleveland or of those who, with him, contributed to the election of a republican president. If any doubt is expressed as to the sincerity of their plea for harmony the doubter is denounced in unmeasured terms. A few plain facts of history may enable the readers of *The Commoner* to judge as to the weight to be given to the professions of interest in the party, made by the advocates of the gold standard.

In 1892 the three parties receiving the highest number of votes all declared for bimetallism. The democratic party said: "We hold to the use of both gold and silver as the standard money of the country, and to the coinage of both gold and silver without discrimination against either metal or charge for coinage." The denunciation of the Sherman law as a make-shift could only be fairly construed in connection with the language above quoted, and the qualifications added to the plank demanding the maintenance of the parity could not be honestly construed as destroying the broad declaration in favor of the double standard. Mr. Cleveland was elected upon this platform and a majority of the votes were known to come from the people who believed in bimetallism and believed in it at the existing ratio of 16 to 1.

The republican platform declared that the American people from tradition and interest favored bimetallism. The populist platform was more explicit, and favored the restoration of free coinage at the ratio of 16 to 1, but while the populist platform was more explicit, the democrats in the senate and house had for nearly twenty years been voting for the very thing the populist platform demanded. As late as 1890, when the Sherman purchase bill was passed, the democrats of the house, by an overwhelming majority, voted in favor of a motion to recommit the Sherman bill with instructions to bring in a free coinage bill.

As soon as Mr. Cleveland took his seat—even before—he began to plan for the carrying out of that part of the platform which pleased Wall street and for the repudiation of that part of the platform which secured him a majority of the votes that elected him. In August, 1893, he called congress together in extraordinary session and caused to be introduced a bill identical with the bill introduced by John Sherman a year before. He forced this republican measure through congress by the aid of patronage, the bill receiving a larger percentage of republican votes than of democratic votes. A number of democrats who could not be corrupted by patronage were deceived by the promise that legislation in favor of the restoration of silver would be undertaken as soon as the Sherman bill was repealed. As soon as the repeal was accomplished the democrats attempted to secure the coinage of the seigniorage, and a number of the democratic members who were misled into voting for the repeal of the Sherman law supported the seigniorage bill with great enthusiasm, but the president, following the dictation of Wall street, vetoed this bill in spite of the fact that a majority of the democrats of both houses had voted for it.

This convinced the democrats that Mr. Cleveland did not intend to keep the pledge made by the platform in favor of bimetallism, but was intent only upon compelling the carrying out of a policy formulated by Wall street and in the interest of Wall street. Later, the president made a contract with the Rothschild-Morgan syndicate, by which some \$60,000,000 of bonds were sold at about \$1.04½, much less than they would have brought in the open market. In reporting to congress this transaction—a transaction in which his former law partner represented the syndicate—he announced that the syndicate had offered better terms, provided congress would authorize the issue of gold bonds, and his representatives in the house tried to secure authority for the issue of gold bonds, but were defeated.

Still later, Mr. Cleveland made a tentative agreement with a Morgan syndicate to take \$100,000,000 of bonds at about \$1.05, and Mr. Morgan went out to secure subscriptions. When it became known that such an agreement was under consideration, public opinion was found to be so hostile to it that the president was compelled to change his plan and offer the bonds at public sale. The offers were several times greater than the total number of bonds to be sold, and the bonds were disposed of at about \$1.10 to \$1.12. Just before the bids were opened Mr. Morgan himself entered a bid for about \$5,000,000 more

than he was to pay at private sale, showing conclusively that he was either unacquainted with the value of the bonds or that he was scheming with the president to get the bonds for about \$5,000,000 less than they were worth.

Mr. Cleveland's administration was so completely dominated by the financiers of New York that the members of his own party refused to indorse him or to become responsible for his views, and then we saw that remarkable evidence of uncorrupted patriotism and political virtue which resulted in the overthrow of the Cleveland leadership by the rank and file of the party. This overthrow was accomplished in spite of the feeling of party pride in an executive; in spite of the influence of the officeholders; in spite of the influence of nearly all the banks; in spite of the influence of all the railroads, and in spite of almost all of the democratic dailies in the larger cities. This country has never seen a better illustration of the power of the people to control the party machinery than this struggle presented. Many of Mr. Cleveland's officeholders resorted to fraud and deception to defeat the very voters who had given office to Mr. Cleveland and his appointees. But the victory was won, and the party was redeemed from the curse of Mr. Cleveland's administration.

The representatives of Mr. Cleveland in the Chicago convention brought in a minority report protesting against free coinage, on the ground that it would prevent international bimetallism to which they professed to be attached, but when these same men met shortly afterwards at Indianapolis they threw off the mask and came out boldly for the gold standard which they dared not admit at Chicago. This was in itself conclusive proof that at Chicago they were attempting a fraud upon the party and the country.

Then followed the campaign of 1896 in which the influence of Mr. Cleveland, and as far as the public knew, the influence of every cabinet officer, was ostensibly thrown to the Palmer and Buckner ticket, but really thrown to the republican ticket. The Palmer and Buckner committee had a campaign fund which seemed to be ample in amount; it had speakers going over the country denouncing the Chicago platform and the ticket there nominated. The Palmer and Buckner committee was in constant communication with the republican committee, and the gold democrats pretended to hold up one standard before the country while most of them were secretly working with and for the republican party. A number of the eastern members of the national committee, while refusing to resign their places upon the committee, refused to give assistance to the party. They even refused to attend the meetings when the democratic candidates spoke in the towns where they lived. And yet in spite of desertion, deception, corruption, fraud, intimidation and all the other means employed, the democratic ticket polled about a million more votes than Mr. Cleveland polled four years before.

The gold democrats attacked the democratic platform at three points: first, the silver plank, and yet the silver plank simply declared for a financial policy that had been voted for uniformly by a majority of the democrats of both house and senate from 1874 down to the time when Mr. Cleveland deceived, or corrupted with patronage, enough democrats to give a majority in favor of a republican measure.

The second objection made to the platform was to the income tax plank, and yet the income tax had been made a part of the Wilson bill by the democratic party in congress, and the bill became a law by the failure of Mr. Cleveland to veto it, although he refused to sign it.

The third objection was to the plank against government by injunction, but this plank simply indorsed a bill that had passed the senate almost without objection. The criticism that our platform was not respectful to the courts was not sincerely made, for there was nothing in our platform that compared in harshness with the criticism of the supreme court made by the republican party from 1850 to 1860 and by Mr. Lincoln and other leaders of the republican party.

The reasons given by the leaders of the gold standard movement for opposing the party were not the real reasons that influenced them. It was not so much any particular plank in the platform or even all the planks that they objected to; they objected to having the party taken out of the hands of organized wealth and made re-

sponsive to the wishes of the voters, for no platform ever adopted was more responsive to the will of the members of the party.

When the election was over Mr. Cleveland met his satellites at a New York banquet, boasted of his part in the republican victory, and declared his purpose to continue the fight against the democratic organization. This was at a time when Mr. Cleveland and other representatives of the corporations expected to marshal a majority of the democratic voters against the Chicago platform. There was no talk of harmony then; it was war, and a war of extermination. In the fall of 1897 the gold democrats ran a state ticket in several of the states where the Chicago platform democrats were in control, but where there were supposed to be a great many gold democrats. Mr. Watterson with the *Courier-Journal* supported such a ticket in Kentucky; Mr. Cleveland's ex-secretary of agriculture put out such a ticket in Nebraska; and an effort was also made in Iowa and some of the other states. The result, however, was so disappointing to the gold democrats that they decided not to show their weakness further, and some of them went into the republican party where they now find congenial association, while others came back to the democratic party, not for the purpose of assisting the party, but for the purpose of securing control of the organization in order to do inside what they failed to do outside, namely, destroy the party.

In 1898 the question of imperialism was thrust into the arena of politics by the action of the republican administration. It looked as if this might be a means of reuniting the democratic party. Mr. Cleveland and several other prominent gold democrats took strong ground against a colonial system. Possibly they thought that there was a chance to secure the leadership of the party on this issue, but as soon as the conventions were held it became apparent that the democrats who favored bimetallism also opposed imperialism, and that, therefore, the new issue gave no reason to change the party organization. The trust question also grew in importance, and men who had helped to put the trusts in authority by helping to elect a republican administration expressed their fear of these great aggregations of capital. During all the time between 1896 and 1900 the papers that bolted the ticket in 1896 kept up a continual bombardment of the Chicago platform. They spent more time and more energy in trying to destroy the Chicago platform than they did in attacking the republican position, but in spite of all that could be done by the gold and corporation influences, the democratic voters remained loyal to their platform and in 1900 every state and territory but two indorsed the Chicago platform. At the Kansas City convention the former position of the party was adhered to, but the question of imperialism was made paramount and next to that the trust question was given most emphasis. This ought to have been satisfactory to the gold democrats, but it was not. Imperialism attacked the very principles of the republic, but many gold democrats were more interested in the gold standard than they were in our form of government. The trusts had shown their ability to dominate the republican party, but even this did not bring all advocates of the gold standard back to the party. They constantly declared that the silver question was dead, that events had killed it, that the people did not want the question agitated, and yet they themselves made it the paramount issue by allowing it to control their action. On the 25th of July, 1900, the national committee of the Palmer and Buckner party met at Indianapolis and adopted the following resolutions:

Resolved, That in the opinion of this committee the nomination of candidates by the national democratic party for the offices of president and vice president is unwise and inexpedient.

Second—That we reaffirm the Indianapolis platform of 1896.

Third—We recommend the state committees in their respective states to preserve their organizations and take such steps as in their opinion may best subserve the principles of our party, especially in the maintenance of a sound currency, the right of private contract, the independence of the judiciary, and the authority of the president to enforce federal laws, a covert attack on which is made

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